

instruments of ratification. With these reservations and understandings, the Convention and Protocols will not require implementing legislation for the United States.

The Convention and Protocols will be effective tools to assist in the global effort to combat transnational organized crime in its many forms, such as trafficking and smuggling of persons. They provide for a broad range of cooperation, including extradition, mutual legal assistance, and measures regarding property, in relation to serious crimes committed by an organized group that has a transnational element.

The Convention also imposes on the States Parties an obligation to criminalize, if they have not already done so, certain types of conduct characteristic of transnational organized crime. For the Convention, these are: participation in an organized criminal group (i.e., conspiracy), money laundering, bribery of domestic pub-

lic officials, and obstruction of justice. The Protocols require parties to criminalize trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants. These provisions will serve to create a global criminal law standard for these offenses, several of which (e.g., trafficking in persons) currently are not criminal in many countries. The Trafficking Protocol also includes important provisions regarding assistance to and protection of victims of trafficking.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the Convention and Protocols, and that it give its advice and consent to ratification, subject to the reservations and understandings described in the accompanying report of the Department of State.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
February 23, 2004.

Remarks to the Republican Governors Association *February 23, 2004*

Thank you all very much. It is always an honor to welcome fellow Governors to Washington, DC. I'm a proud former member of the RGA. And tonight we're proud to welcome the newest members of this growing organization, Olene, Ernie, Haley, and Arnold. The Governor of California is new to politics, so he's still getting used to all the cameras and lights. [*Laughter*] I used to think the coolest Governor was from Florida. [*Laughter*]

The most distinguished former member of the RGA is a predecessor of Governor Schwarzenegger and a predecessor of mine. President Ronald Reagan had his 93d birthday this month, and tonight we want Nancy and his family to know we are thinking of this great American. Ronald Reagan's leadership revived America's economy, renewed America's strength, and lifted Amer-

ica's confidence. And that spirit of optimism and faith in fundamental American values is the spirit we will carry to victory in November of 2004.

I married really well. [*Laughter*] I am so honored—I appreciate you coming tonight, Laura. She's a great First Lady for our country. I'm really proud of the job she's doing.

I want to thank my friend Bob Taft for being the chairman of this august group. I appreciate Kenny Guinn from Nevada for being the vice chairman. I thank Governor Mitt Romney of Massachusetts for hosting this reception. I want to thank all the other Republican Governors who are here. I'm proud to call you friend.

I want to thank all of you who are here to support these Governors. They're making a significant difference in their States. They

bring such optimism and hope. I appreciate the members of my Cabinet who are here.

I also want to acknowledge a man who is not here. Vice President Dick Cheney spent the day campaigning in Minneapolis and Wichita, but he's recently completed another important assignment. Once again I put him in charge of my Vice Presidential search committee. *[Laughter]* He tells me he's reviewed all the candidates, and he's come back with the same recommendation as last time. *[Laughter]* In fact, I made the choice myself, after I had taken the measure of this man. They don't come any better, and I am proud to have Dick Cheney by my side.

We meet during the Presidential primary season. We're witnessing a clear trend. It looks like we have a winner in the Republican primaries. *[Laughter]* The other party's nomination battle is still playing out. The candidates are an interesting group with diverse opinions: For tax cuts and against them; for NAFTA and against NAFTA; for the PATRIOT Act and against the PATRIOT Act; in favor of liberating Iraq and opposed to it. And that's just one Senator from Massachusetts.

The other party is still not finished selecting its nominee. Yet this much is already certain: Come November, the voters are going to have a very clear choice. It's a choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving the economy forward or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people. It is a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger. The American people will decide between two visions of Government, a Government that encourages ownership and opportunity and responsibility or a Government that takes your money and makes your choices. I will set these alternatives squarely before the American people in a spirited campaign. I look forward to the contest.

We have a record of historic achievement. And most important, we have a posi-

tive vision for the years ahead, for winning the war against terror, for extending peace and freedom and creating jobs and opportunity here at home. We'll leave no doubt where we stand, and we will win our second term in November.

The last 3 years have brought serious challenges. We've given serious answers and the strong leadership these times of extraordinary change demand. We came to office with an economy heading into recession. We delivered historic tax relief, and the consumer spending and investment that resulted helped lift our economy back to growth so that people are getting hired again. At a time when competition is not just across town but across borders and continents, America's productive workers have made this economy the fastest growing of any major industrialized nation.

We had to confront corporate crimes that cost people jobs and savings, so we passed the strongest corporate reforms since Franklin Roosevelt and made it clear that we will not tolerate dishonesty in the boardrooms of America.

We saw war and grief arrive on a quiet September morning, and from that day to this, we have pursued terrorists across the world. We've captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them know we're on their trail. There is no cave or hole deep enough to hide them.

We confronted the dangers of state-sponsored terror and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. We have used the power of this country to end forever two of the most violent and dangerous regimes on Earth. More than 50 million people in Afghanistan and Iraq are reclaiming the rights and dignity of free men and women, and America has been proud, once again, to lead the armies of liberation.

When Dick Cheney and I came to Washington, we found a military that was underfunded and underappreciated, so we increased the defense budget to give our men and women the tools and training they

need to win the war on terror. And today, no one in the world can question the skill, the strength, and the spirit of the United States military.

We learned that on September the 11th, our homeland is no longer protected by vast oceans, so we reorganized our Government and created the Department of Homeland Security to safeguard the ports and borders and to better protect the American people.

When we came to office, people in this city had gotten used to gridlock. Old problems were used to score points. Old problems were politicized, debated, and just passed on from year to year. We didn't come here to this Nation's Capital to do things the Washington way. We chose to lead and to get things done. We passed major reforms to raise the standards of public schools. We passed reforms in Medicare to give prescription drugs and choice to our seniors. We're showing that with big goals and clear principles, you can get past old differences and make progress for all of the American citizens.

It's the President's job to confront problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. It's the President's job to seize opportunities and not let them slip away. A President needs to step up and make the hard decisions and keep his commitments, and that is how I will continue to lead our country.

Great events will turn on this election. The man who sits in the Oval Office will set the course of the war on terror and the direction of our economy. The security and prosperity of America are at stake. Our course is clear.

In the next 4 years, we'll keep our enemies on the run and extend the frontiers of liberty. In the next 4 years, we'll help more Americans to find that there are opportunities in a changing economy. In the next 4 years, we will stand for the values that make us a good and decent country.

Our opponents have not offered much in the way of strategies to win the war

or policies to expand our economy. So far, all we hear is a lot of old bitterness and partisan anger. Anger is not an agenda for the future of America. We're taking on the big issues with strength and resolve and determination, and we stand ready to lead this Nation for the next 4 years.

A big issue for every family in America is the Federal tax burden. With the largest tax relief since Ronald Reagan was President, we have left more money in the hands of those who earned it. By saving and spending and investing and to help create new jobs, the American people have used their money far better than the Federal Government would have.

Our opponents have their own plan for these tax cuts. They plan to take them away. They will use that money to expand the Federal Government. I have a better idea. To keep this economy growing, we will have fiscal discipline in Washington, DC. To keep this economy going, the tax cuts must be permanent.

We must do more to keep this economy growing. We need to protect small-business owners and employees from frivolous lawsuits and needless regulation. We need to control the costs of health care by passing medical liability reform. No one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit. We need to pass sound energy legislation to modernize our electricity system and to make America less dependent on foreign sources of oil.

Our opponents talk about job creation, but they're against every one of these job-creating measures. Empty talk about jobs won't get anybody hired. The way to create jobs is our pro-growth, pro-entrepreneur, pro-small-business-owner agenda.

This economy of ours is going through a time of challenge and change. In the new economy, many workers change jobs several times or start their own businesses or work out of their homes as contractors. They often don't have pensions or health care through their jobs. Many have had to learn new skills. It's our responsibility

to help people gain the skills and security to make a good living and to look forward to their retirement.

All skills start with education. My administration has put education at the top of the agenda. We passed the No Child Left Behind Act, a good law that is bringing higher standards and accountability to every public school in America. We have a plan to help high school students who fall behind in reading and math. We have a plan to help community colleges train workers for the industries that are creating the most new jobs. We are strongly committed to education because we believe everyone in America should have a chance to learn and to succeed and to realize the great promise of our country.

My administration understands the importance of ownership in our society. We've set a great goal: We want every worker in America to become a saver and an owner. And we have an agenda to meet this goal. We'll help more people of every background to own their homes and build their own savings. We'll encourage more people to own their own small businesses. We'll help more people to own their own health care plans. We want younger workers to own and manage their own retirement under Social Security, so that one day every worker can have the security of a personal account. When people have solid assets to call their own, they gain independence and security and dignity and more control over their future. I believe in private property so much, I want everyone in America to have some.

On issue after issue, the American people have a clear choice. Our opponents are against personal retirement accounts, against putting patients in charge of Medicare, against tax relief. They seem to be against every idea that gives Americans more authority and more choices and more control over their own lives. We'll hear them make a lot of promises over the next eight months, and listen closely, because there's a theme. Every promise will in-

crease the power of politicians and bureaucrats over your income, over your retirement, over your health care, and over your life. It's the same old Washington mindset. They'll give the orders, and you'll pay the bills. I've got news for them. America has gone beyond that way of thinking, and we're not going back. I trust the people, not Washington politicians, to make the best decisions for their own money, their own health, their own retirement, and their own lives.

Our future also depends on America's leadership in this world. The momentum of freedom in our time is strong, but we still face serious challenges. Al Qaida is wounded but not broken. Terrorists are testing our will in Afghanistan and Iraq. Regimes in North Korea and Iran are challenging the peace. The actions we take and the decisions we make in this decade will have consequences far into this century. If America shows weakness and uncertainty, the world will drift toward tragedy. That will not happen on my watch. This Nation is strong and confident in the cause of freedom, and no friend or enemy today doubts the word of the United States.

America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban chose defiance, and the Taliban are no longer in power. America and our allies gave an ultimatum to the terror regime in Iraq. The dictator chose defiance, and now the dictator sits in a prison cell.

September the 11th, 2001, taught a lesson I have not forgotten. America must confront threats before they fully materialize. In Iraq, my administration looked at the intelligence and saw a danger. Members of Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a danger. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a danger. The previous administration and Congress looked at the intelligence and made regime change in Iraq the policy of our country. We all knew Saddam's history well. He waged aggressive

wars against neighboring countries and aspired to dominate the Middle East. He cultivated ties to terrorists. He built weapons of mass destruction. He hid those weapons. He used chemical weapons against thousands of Iraqis and Iranians.

In 2002, the United Nations Security Council yet again demanded a full accounting of Saddam Hussein's weapons programs. As he had for over a decade, Saddam Hussein refused to comply. So we had a choice to make: Either take the word of a madman, or take action to defend America and the world. Faced with that choice, I will defend America every time.

Others would have chosen differently. They now agree that the world is better off with Saddam out of power. They just didn't support removing Saddam from power. *[Laughter]* Maybe they were hoping he'd lose the next Iraqi election. *[Laughter]* We showed the dictator and a watching world that we mean what we say. Because our coalition acted, Saddam's torture chambers are closed. Because we acted, the Middle East is more peaceful. Because we acted, Iraq's weapons programs are ended forever. Because we acted, nations like Libya have gotten the message and renounced their weapons programs. Because we acted, an example of democracy is rising at the heart of the Middle East. Because we acted, the world is more free, and America is more secure.

We still face thugs and terrorists in Iraq who would rather go on killing the innocent than accept the advance of liberty. They know that a free Iraq would be a major defeat in the cause of terror. This collection of killers is trying to shake the will of America and the civilized world. They don't know us very well. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

We're aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we do not have to face them in our own country. We're calling other nations to help Iraq build a free society, which will make us all safer. We're standing with the Iraqi peo-

ple as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These aren't easy tasks, but they're essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun, and we'll win this important victory in the war on terror.

On national security, Americans have the clearest possible choice. Our opponents say they approve of bold action in the world but only if no other government disagrees. I'm all for united action, and so are the 34 coalition partners we have in Iraq right now. But America must never outsource America's national security decisions to the leaders of other governments.

Some of our opponents are skeptical that the war on terror is really a war at all. They view terrorism more as a crime, a problem to be solved with law enforcement and indictments. Our Nation followed that approach after the World Trade Center was bombed in 1993. The matter was handled in the courts and thought to be settled. But the terrorists were still training in Afghanistan, plotting in other nations, and drawing up more ambitious plans. After the chaos and carnage of September the 11th, it is not enough to serve our enemies with legal papers. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States, and war is what they got.

The men and women who are fighting this war and who have seen the enemy understand the stakes. Last year, in a letter home from the Iraqi theater, a Navy Corpsman named Lonnie Lewis wrote this: "We have to remind ourselves of what this country stands for, life, liberty, and justice for all. In order to maintain those rights, we have to stop the threat of terrorism." Corpsman Lewis' letter concludes, "My family is first. My country is where they live. I will defend it."

This is the caliber of the people who are defending America. We are counting on them. The people of Iraq and people across the Middle East are depending on

them. And I assure you, ladies and gentlemen, the cause of freedom is in good hands.

This Nation is prosperous and strong, yet we need to remember the sources of America's greatness. We're strong because we love freedom. America has a special charge to keep, because we are freedom's home and defender. We believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. We believe that freedom is the future of every nation, and we know that freedom is not America's gift to the world. It is the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman in this world.

We also know that the greatest strength of this country lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens. We're strong because of the values we try to live by, courage and compassion, reverence and integrity. We're strong because of the institutions that help to give us direction and purpose, families and schools and religious congregations. These values and institutions are fundamental to our lives, and they deserve the respect of our Government.

We stand for the fair treatment of faith-based groups so they can receive Federal support for their works of compassion and healing. We will not stand for Government discrimination against people of faith.

We stand for welfare reforms that require work and strengthen marriage, which have helped millions of Americans find independence and dignity. We will not stand for any attempt to weaken those reforms and send people back into lives of dependence.

We stand for a culture of life in which every person counts and every person matters. We will not stand for the treatment of any life as a commodity to be experimented upon or exploited or cloned.

We stand for the confirmation of judges who strictly and faithfully interpret the law. We will not stand for judges who undermine democracy by legislating from the bench and try to remake the culture by court order.

And we stand for a culture of responsibility in America. We're changing the culture of America from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we're responsible for the decisions we make. If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're concerned about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in this new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

For all Americans, these years in our history will always stand apart. There are quiet times in the life of a nation when little is expected of leaders. This is not one of those times. You and I are living in a period when the stakes are high and the challenges are difficult, the choices are clear, and resolve is needed.

None of us will ever forget that week when one era ended and another began. On September the 14th, 2001, I stood in the ruins of the Twin Towers. I remember a lot that day. Workers in hardhats were shouting, "Whatever it takes." One fellow pointed at me and said, "Don't let me down." As we all did that day, these men and women searching through the rubble took it personally. I took it personally. I've a responsibility that goes on. I will never relent in bringing justice to our enemies. I will defend America, whatever it takes.

In these times I've also been witness to the character of this Nation. Not so long ago, some had their doubts about the American character, our capacity to meet serious challenges, to serve a cause greater than self-interest. But Americans have given their answer. I've seen the unselfish courage of our troops. I've seen the heroism of Americans in the face of danger.

I've seen the spirit of service and compassion renewed in our country. We've all seen our Nation unite in common purpose when it mattered most.

We will need all of these qualities for the work ahead. We have a war to win, and the world is counting on us to lead the cause of freedom. We have a duty to spread compassion and opportunity to every part of America.

This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for the United States of America, the best days lie ahead.

God bless. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:18 p.m. at the Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Olene S. Walker of Utah; Gov. Ernie Fletcher of Kentucky; Gov. Haley Barbour of Mississippi; Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger of California; Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Gov. Bob Taft of Ohio; Gov. Kenny C. Guinn of Nevada; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Calling for a Constitutional Amendment Defining and Protecting Marriage *February 24, 2004*

Good morning. Eight years ago, Congress passed and President Clinton signed the Defense of Marriage Act, which defined marriage for purposes of Federal law as the legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife. The Act passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 342 to 67 and the Senate by a vote of 85 to 14. Those congressional votes and the passage of similar defense-of-marriage laws in 38 States express an overwhelming consensus in our country for protecting the institution of marriage.

In recent months, however, some activist judges and local officials have made an aggressive attempt to redefine marriage. In Massachusetts, four judges on the highest court have indicated they will order the issuance of marriage licenses to applicants of the same gender in May of this year. In San Francisco, city officials have issued thousands of marriage licenses to people of the same gender, contrary to the California Family Code. That code, which clearly defines marriage as the union of a man and a woman, was approved overwhelmingly by the voters of California. A

county in New Mexico has also issued marriage licenses to applicants of the same gender. And unless action is taken, we can expect more arbitrary court decisions, more litigation, more defiance of the law by local officials, all of which adds to uncertainty.

After more than two centuries of American jurisprudence and millennia of human experience, a few judges and local authorities are presuming to change the most fundamental institution of civilization. Their actions have created confusion on an issue that requires clarity.

On a matter of such importance, the voice of the people must be heard. Activist courts have left the people with one recourse. If we are to prevent the meaning of marriage from being changed forever, our Nation must enact a constitutional amendment to protect marriage in America.

Decisive and democratic action is needed, because attempts to redefine marriage in a single State or city could have serious consequences throughout the country. The Constitution says that "full faith and credit shall be given in each State to the public acts and records and judicial proceedings